

Vol. 4.

[NEW SERIES.]

Price, 10 Cents. Per Annum, \$3.

No. 15.

[Whole No. 354.]

SATURDAY, JULY 3, 1875.

Subject: Secret of Christ's Power.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



NEW YORK:

J. B. FORD & COMPANY,

(27 PARK PLACE, AND 24 & 26 MURRAY STREET.)

1875.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.  
European Agents: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Crown Buildings,  
188 Fleet Street, London. Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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## SECRET OF CHRIST'S POWER.

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"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."—1 COR. i., 17.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 COR. ii., 2.

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It did not belong to the literary habits of antiquity to write such analytic memoirs explanatory of a man's education, or of his thought about himself in history, as has taken place in modern times. Among the best books that we have in these later days are either those which are a competent account, by such men as Goethe, of themselves, and of the development of their mind and genius, or works made up from the writings of men that have disclosed the progress of development in their character and in their history. I say these are among the best, because the building of a man is the noblest work of time; and if it be worth our while to know how architects build, and by what principles; if it be a matter of more than curiosity to know how Titian put on his colors, or how Michael Angelo wrought, whether in stone or in pigment, how much more is it a matter, not only of curiosity, but indeed of that which lies far beyond all curiosity—namely, personal importance—to know how men are made, what are the stages of their development, and especially in the case of those whose breadth and fruitfulness of life have rendered the race indebted to them.

Now, if we could have had an itinerary, a journal, of John, of Paul, or, above all, of Jesus, how rich does our imagination teach us we should have been! I cannot but mourn the unfruitfulness of Christ's written life. That his life was enormously fruitful, we have the evidence of his own



followers. John tells us that if all that Christ said and did should be put into books, the world could not contain them. We are not disposed to call John to an exact account for this statement. It simply implies a large number; it is an extravagance for a definite number: but it indicates, as we know from other sources, that a large part of the career of Christ, unwatched, or unsought by the memory, was transient, and that we have therefore only specimens of it. If we could have had his analysis of men, his thought of society, his view of the maxims, prudential and other, that had grown up in the world; if we could have had his notion of armies, and of great cities, and of their municipal policies; if we could have had his secret thoughts upon all the developments of human life, as we have had them in respect to the soul of the individual man,—how large an inheritance would the world have had that has perished from it! I do not discuss the reasons—which are many and perhaps satisfying to the intellect, if not to curiosity—why it should be so.

Paul was, in one respect, the most satisfying of all the men who had to do with the primitive establishment of truth. Moses gave us but little of his life, though he gave us a little. Samuel gave us less of his. David wrote his *intense* life, and but very little else. As it were, only when under such stress of feeling that he could not repress himself, did he sing; and we have that record of the heart. The prophets, such as Isaiah, gave us something, and yet but very little. It is not until we come down to Paul that we find this gracious selfness, which is spread through all his epistles; and he alone, of all the sacred writers, gives us an account of the principle or procedure of his ministerial life.

Corinth, perhaps the most luxurious, the most voluptuous city of antiquity visited by Paul, became the seat of an early church, and was rich in receiving two letters from him. These letters—especially the first one—contain no inconsiderable amount of light on the theory, if I may say so, of his practice; and it is from this first letter that I have selected the two passages which give us the key-note of his preaching on the atonement. He preached the atonement never as a doctrine: he preached it as a biographical living personality.

"I determined, when I came among you," he says to them, "not to know any synagogue; not to know the Talmud, nor any other commentary; not to know any sacrifice, nor any ordinance, nor any history of God's people, nor any philosophy, as the secret and source of that power which I wanted, and meant to have, in my ministration among you. I determined not to preach with art, with accomplishment, with curious cunning, penning up men by ingenuities of words. I determined to resort to no sophist work; to no flowery figures of rhetoric, sounding sweet in the ear, and robbing the soul of meaning; to no shrewd theories of Greek philosophy (though Paul was brought up in a school that was pervaded with the Greek spirit). None of these things did I rely upon. I might have been a sweet singer as a poet; I might have been a bold speaker as a prophet; I might have been a soothsayer; but I had in my mind a source of inspiration and power which was transcendently higher than these; and I determined not to sacrifice, nor to run the risk of sacrificing, that power, by any of these meretricious or secular ministrations. I determined to know Christ, and *him crucified*."

The peculiarity is not that he determined not to speak on any subjects except those which immediately related to Christ. That was not the topic before him. In those old days of trial through which we went, men did not want us to preach about slavery and its abominations, and this text was held before us, to pen us up. We were told that we must preach nothing but the amenities of the gospel. Paul had said that he was determined not to know anything but Christ; and so they preached Christ in such a manner that nobody could dream what Christ was. Therefore Christ was preached so as to be devoid of the Spirit and of power. Not the Christ that came to open prison doors, and break chains, and give light to the blind, and voice to the dumb, but the doctrinal Christ, was the one that was to be preached. Such was the charter of that illicit, ignominious method; whereas this passage has no such meaning.

Paul did not say that he was going to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified. That is denied in this same book.

He spoke of incest, adulteries, all manner of traffic, and every phase of social, political and economic conduct between man and man. His first letter to the Corinthians is full of these things,—showing that no such narrow, meagre, poor interpretation could properly be put upon this declaration. What he meant was, “I determined not to know anything as a source and secret of power save Christ, and him crucified. I did not mean that you should go away from my discourse saying, ‘What a wise man Paul is!’ I did not mean that you should go away from me, saying, ‘Was there ever a sweeter speaker in this world?’ I meant to carry on the discussion of every topic among you so that, when you went away, the dominant and pervading feeling should be, ‘How near we have been to God! What a view of God we have had!’”

What a view? Yes; because he does not say, “I was determined not to know among you anything but Christ”—all that by itself is lame and halt: he said, “I determined not to know anything among you but Christ, and *him crucified*.” The crucified Christ was what he was determined to preach. “The cross,” he says, in the first passage that I read. The cross was that on which he insisted.

“Christ sent me not to baptize.”

Not that he wished to stigmatize baptism; but there was something lordlier than that.

“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”

Remember the time when he spoke this. The cross was then regarded differently from what it is now. You wear magnificent jeweled crosses. I was looking at some crosses yesterday at Tiffany’s. Some I could have bought for fifty dollars. For some with fine cameos, and some with pearls on the top and diamonds on the bottom, I should have been obliged to pay large amounts. There were crosses there that I could have bought for one dollar, and ten dollars, and fifty dollars; and there were some that I suppose I should have had to pay fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars for.



Then there are crosses on the tops of churches, and there is gilt on them—they are covered with gold ; but Christ's cross had not a bit of gold on it. There is a jeweled cross at every beauty's bosom. Everywhere, the world over, it is "The cross, the cross, the cross," until the very name has superseded the name of Christ. Ministers preach about the cross as if it meant Jehovah.

Therefore, when Paul says, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ;" when he says, "I am not to preach with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect,"—you cannot understand that thing at all ; for the cross in Christ's day was a dirty thing ; it was a nasty thing. On the cross hung the ignominious criminals of the world. The cross was but another name for all that was degrading, and all that men despised ; because justice—offended justice—put men to the rack and to shame upon it. It marked ignominy, and ill-desert. It was the hangman's sign. It was worse than the gibbet and the rope ; for it not only was atrocious in its cruelty, but it indicated the popular idea of the desert of the criminal that hung upon it. And when the Lord Jesus Christ was put upon the cross, he was put at the very lowest point of human esteem. There was nothing below that. It was at the bottom of all thought of ignominy.

A pretty text Paul had ! A great chance had he, going out among the accomplished Greeks—eloquent, elegant men, that had reasoned, for generations, with the highest themes of cosmogony ; men that had their heavens full of gods, and had also an esoteric system in which still there was a theology in the proper sense of the term ! Paul, a Jew—an expelled Jew—probably a man of most insignificant, or dwarfed, if not deformed presence—this Jew, this foreigner, came among the Corinthians, a most accomplished, exquisite, and thoroughly refined people (refined to the point, almost, of effeminacy), saying, "I did not intend to preach to you as your rhetors do, nor did I intend to argue with you as your philosophers do ; I did not come with any exterior influence to cheat the eye, and coax the ear, and sweeten the imagination : I came bringing that Jew whose name was Jesus. He

was a man esteemed so vile by his own people that the rulers of the people put him to death. And since they were a subject province, they persuaded the Roman government of his desert, so that the imperial power of Rome was put into their hands wherewith to do it. So the ruling power of the globe was conjoined to that of his own countrymen to put him to a death the most disgraceful known in human annals. And this Jew malefactor, crucified—that is what I had to preach to you ; and I determined that I would never shrink from, and would never let go, that word *crucified* ; that I would never hide in flowers of explanation that stern and cruel thing which lifted Christ between the earth and heaven ; that I would never let Paul be so eloquent that you would forget that his theme was *Christ Jesus*, and him, not a Prince in glory, and regent, in whose hands were the reins of empire, but *crucified*.”

He tore open the grave, and brought forth the wounded body. The spear marks, the nail marks, the dripping crown marks—all these he held up before them. Was this wise ? Was it the way ? No ; but then, what was the result of it ? Was it, or was it not, victorious ? Did it, or did it not, succeed ? Has the world felt the power of it, or has it not ? If it has felt it—and who shall deny that it has—then the question comes back with double force : How is it that the world should feel a moral power derived from such a source as that ? Are these the themes that are congenial to refinement ?

If the apostle had gone into Gaul, among those coarse-fibered nations, probably the more cruel and hideous the theme, the more it would have touched the animal nature of such men ; but here he was among super-cultured men—men the most advanced in life ; and he chose to represent that most odious period of his hero's life, the hour of his weakness and his defeat ; the hour of his obloquy and execration ; the hour of his death : and he said, “I stand by that ;” and he gained a victory over men's reason, their imagination and their affections ; and the world has gone up through many degrees by Paul's inspired wisdom in maintaining for his central source of power the cross, and Jesus Christ crucified on it. Now, what was the secret of it ?



How should that be so? What was there that had such power?

In later times, the church, by organization, by the use of human means for human ends, has carried forward a great kingdom in this world; and all the natural forces, as well as all the elements of civility, have conspired, and both the ethic of the world and the theoretic of the world have developed very much on the subject of religion: but the beginnings were without any organization; without ordinances; without symbols. Paul left the synagogue behind him in Judea. The temple existed only a few years after that. Sacrifices were abolished. That whole ritual which before existed was hidden in a few hands, or carried abroad by a few faithful Jews. The modern symbolizations had not then been born. The secret and source of power was at the time when twelve men went abroad, preaching in upper chambers, or after service in synagogues, in foreign cities, among people of an unknown tongue. Here were the secret springs of all that power which has transformed the world, and is still transforming it, in civilization and religion. Paul says the root of it lay in that; and there was something more than mere dexterity of handling in it. There must have been something intrinsic; and what was that element?

Well, if you say that Christ was a good man, and suffered, as all good men do, for his kind, then I confess that I cannot understand what was the source and the secret of his power. I go back, as Mary did in the garden; and if you divest Jesus Christ of the attributes of divinity, making him merely a man, taking the fate of a good man, like hundreds and thousands of others, then I do not undertake to argue the matter at all: I merely say, "If that is all, I cannot understand nor feel the power, the beauty, the sacrifice, nor the nobleness of his teachings, and the sublimity of his death. I believe in these things, but I cannot explain them on that hypothesis."

Where is Socrates? Was a church led by his example with such enthusiasm that they eagerly ran to death? Where are the men that have swamped their passions, and put them under, and drained the morass of the soul, for the sake of Socrates? Where has his name been enshrined? When

have the weeping children of sorrow and trouble gone down before him? What church bears his name in his own land, or in any foreign land? His name is commensurate in knowledge with the globe; but, though we regard Socrates simply as a noble man, he only stands as a man, and his power, as a soul-power, is limited and measurable; whereas, at the name of Jesus Christ every knee bows, and every tongue confesses that he is Lord to the glory of God. What is the secret of this difference of power? Is it that one had organization and the other had not? But it is confessed that organization has been a hindrance rather than a help. There must have been a tremendous force which sustained the organization through the dark ages, and under the burden of the ceremonies and corruptions which have adhered to almost every national church on the globe. It is said that the church has kept Christianity alive; but I say that Christianity has kept the church alive. Men say that the church has handed down to us from age to age the Bible; but I say that, if it had not been for the Bible, there would not have been a church to hand anything down. I hold that the secret power that was in Jesus Christ was that which maintained all church government, and gave an impulse of inspiration to it, and made it worth maintaining.

What, then, is that secret element? It is Christ as representing God to mankind. It is a translation of God, in the person of Christ, from a heavenly language into an earthly and well-understood language. It is God using man's highest conception of fidelity and compassion.

When a burglar broke into a house here in Brooklyn, surprising a man in his sleep, who heroically fought with him, amidst wounds and almost death itself, and would not let go, doing his duty faithfully as a householder and as a citizen (burglars would be scarcer, if brave men were more plentiful), and when his wife, aroused from her sleep by the struggle, offered herself, all the little that she had, putting her life in peril to save him, everybody, seeing her, would have said, "What more can she do than to offer her life?" She was willing to die for him.

When, driven out of her cottage at night by an Indian

assault, the mother takes her little brood of children, driving them before her, putting her body between them and the arrow, people say, "That is *mother*—saving the children." She says, "That is all I have to give—myself." "Yes," they say, "that is all she has to give; and if there is no stone to tell where she is buried, we will consecrate the ground in all the region with our tears." For what is there within the compass of human experience that measures fidelity or love but the giving of one's life? All that is sweet in life is given with the giving of life.

When Kossuth abandoned his home, the scenes of his childhood and youth, vines, fields waving with golden grain, orchards, everything dear to his memory, saying, "I will be an exile as a witness against tyranny," he gave up his living life in such a way that as long as any name on earth lasts his name will last, and will be a perpetual warning and testimony against oppression, and a perpetual argument in favor of liberty.

A man, dying, gives up his life for another; and what is there that the imagination can conceive which makes life more honorable and dear? Whatever is precious in human regard is thus made into an offering. So everything that life means becomes a testimony of affection one for another. One dying for another, signifies the utmost stretch of love.

I can understand very well how a man may die for his country on the battle-field. He never knows it. I can understand very well how a person in the whirl of conflict may be slain. It is very noble for a man to die, even by the sword, for a principle; but where a person deliberately gives up life for a principle, it is a nobler thing.

When the martyrs of England were thrown into prison, and then were tempted, plied with every sophistry, wrought upon by the fascinations and charms of social life, and long and persistently urged by titled royalty and ecclesiastical influence to recant, recant, recant, they said, "No, no! the truth, the truth, the truth is more to me than my own life." What was it that made half-a-dozen men able to revolutionize England? What was it that in the Reformation made blood such good manure for souls? It was this:



that these men, deliberately looking on a principle, or a truth, or a cause, said, "That cause, that truth, that principle is worth *me*; and I give myself for it." That is the most potential of all arguments in favor of a truth; and no great principle, certainly in morals, in religion, or in the organization of liberty in human society, has been established except at the expense of tears and blood. Suffering was necessary, as a baptism, before men, believing in principles, trusted them implicitly.

Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ came on earth to die, he came not simply as a good man suffering for his fellow-men. He was representative. He was Divine. He was the Son of the Everlasting Father. He came as co-eternal and co-equal with God in power and glory; and he was not ashamed to claim equality with God, and he stood for him among men. He came upon earth, not simply to manifest his purity, but to interpret to the world the secret and interior nature of God, and that nature as revealed by his suffering and death. In other words, he came to make man at one with God; to reconcile him to God; to bring him to God. It is said, "to bring man back to God"; but he never was there. He came to bring man to God; and by what special means did he do it?

We had natural laws before, and we had ethical truths before; but that which we wanted was a disclosure of the central disposition of the Eternal God. We had seen God interpreted by Jupiter; we had seen him interpreted by various methods; we had seen him likened in irresistibleness to natural law; we had seen Greek gods made up of theoretic wisdom, and perfectness of administration flowing therefrom: and we wanted something else. We wanted more.

A man is outlawed for his political principles. He is fleeing for his life. He comes into a province where there is a man of great substance and renown. As he draws near to the place, he inquires about him. "Oh," it is answered, "he is very rich and very powerful." "Riches and power are good," says the outlaw; "but I do not dare to trust myself in the hands of a man simply because he has power and wealth." "But he manages all his estate, and all his

working men, and the whole retinue of his servants; he has perfect government over them; and everything about him goes on as regularly as clock-work; and he is a very just man." "All that may be; I can understand how a man may be rich and powerful, and be a good administrator, and an executive, money-making and money-keeping man; but that does not satisfy me." "Well, he is a man of great affection for his family—for his wife and children; and all that are connected with him have occasion to bless God for his bounty every day." "That is very good indeed; that he should love his own is very praiseworthy, but ——." "Ah! but he is very kind to all that are under him." "That, too, is very good. He is getting better and better all the time." "Not only that, but no one about him is sick, nobody is under a ban, but he seems to have compassion for him." "Still better. That is very noble." "And that is not all. He caught some men attempting to rob his orchard, to break into his house, to despoil him, and he took them and treated them so kindly that they were ashamed of themselves; and in all the country there is not a man that would die so quick for another as he would for him." "Ah! I will trust that man now. If he not only loves his own, and not only does right and acts justly, but can take those that are poor and wicked and heal them, he is a man that I can trust, and I will go and give myself up to him. And that which makes me do it is, not his wisdom and power, but the goodness which he shows to those who have gone wrong and fallen."

Christ says, "If you salute those that salute you, what merit have you?" He says, "If you, being good, love the good, what do you more than others?" If you, being pure, love the pure, why, even the hypocrites and Pharisees can do that; but, if you are Christ's, there is to be something other and higher than that.

What was it in Christ that was remarkable? It was a nature that had compassion upon unworth. It was a divine revelation that God looked on sinners with sorrow. That he looked on guilty men sternly, we knew before: winter had taught us that. That he punished lazy men, we knew before. Gout had taught us what luxury entails. We had

seen what they come to, who violate the laws of nature. We did not want anybody to throw light on fate or divine inexorableness in certain directions. All that, the poor, smitten, groaning world had learned before. What we wanted to know was, whether there was anywhere in the boundless universe a being of power and wisdom that could take account of the weak, the worthless, and the wicked.

See how men were born into the world. See how they came in with rickety constitutions. See how children inherited drunken tendencies from unworthy parents. See how children came with the burning lusts of their ancestors of generations back. See how children came with corrupt tendencies from the very cradle. See how many came, destined to be toilers. See how many came far from schools and cities. See how many were brought up as wild beasts from the threshold of life, with little opportunity, and with false teachers. See how many came into the world where men were whirled as in vast cylinders in which irons are polished in manufactories, all sorts thrown together promiscuously, and grinding upon each other. See how, from the first, the inhabitants of the globe have gathered knowledge by attrition and evolution rather than in any other way.

Look at what men are. See the complexity of their organization. Look at their want of instruction. See how little knowledge they have of themselves, and of the great laws of the globe on which they dwell. See how blind they are, how poor they are, and how disloyal they are, partly from ignorance, and partly from the impulse of their passions, which they know not how to restrain, and which drive them as brute beasts are driven.

Think how men lived in those groaning days of the Roman Empire. Nothing is more cruel than civilization in its first steps. In oriental despotism there was cruelty, cruelty, cruelty; and cruelty was wrought into law, whose chief function was condemnation, condemnation, condemnation—punishment, punishment, punishment; and the whole creation groaned and travailed in pain. Then it was that the disclosure came; and I do not wonder that the angels sang on Christmas morning, and that the heavens themselves



seemed to beam with new light, and to ring with new melody, when there came the revelation from God, saying, "Good will toward men." Toward men, just as they are; toward men of just such materials as they are made up of; men of just such conduct as they are addicted to; men of just such chances and conditions as belong to them,—there is good will—Divine good will—Divine good will backed by everlasting wisdom and power. How could men believe it?

Then came Christ, teaching. He taught us to say, "Our Father;" he taught everybody to say it; and the heavens were spread over our head no longer as a prison roof. Thereafter they were a crystal dome; they were our Father's house. Our Father in heaven was not cabined and confined by earthly limitations, but he had the sources of universal power.

Christ taught us by his own example what his Father was; for, although he sternly set aside the arrogant and conceited Pharisees, the poor, the mean, the thieving, the lecher, the publican, the sinner, the harlot,—these he made to feel the light of hope. The inspiration of the divine heart fell upon them; and he said to them, "There is a heaven for you:" that is to say, there is a power that can dissolve corruption, and that can bring out of it purity. God is on your side, if you are on your own side. There is a Heart in heaven that feels for you. And as there needed to be some measure of the Divine love, he gave himself as a testimony, than which there could be no other comparable in the light of human intelligence. He took that which to all the world, and to every nation in it, is the limit and the measure of fidelity and love—willingness to give life for another—as an interpretation of the Divine nature, and gave himself a ransom for many. Dying, he opened the secret disposition of God, and taught us what atonement means. It means God's nature; it means the God of mercy manifested by the Lord Jesus Christ; and, from that hour to this, the declaration has gone abroad all the world over, "Whosoever turns from evil and seeks good by the help of God is forgiven, and passes from darkness to light, and is no longer under condemnation; whoever turns from that which is

wrong towards that which is right, needs nothing but the turning; for God is already exerting the divine influence in his behalf."

Do you suppose that he who sleeps in the morning needs, when he has waked up, to have the sun rise for him? The sun is up, and is waiting for him; and he that has done wrong needs to have nothing created or called forth in his behalf. God has forgiven, he has loved; and, the moment the man turns toward him, the thing is done, it is accomplished.

This was that peculiar divine nature that Paul perceived—namely, a God willing to suffer, and that, not on account of his own sin, not because of any weakness on his part, not from any of those things which make suffering in men by reason of limitation, but for the sake of others' good. He took that feature of suffering which says, "I take your burden and make myself heavy with it; I take your sorrow and dissolve in tears thereby; I take your anguish and cause my heart to suffer, that you may be the better."

We have the sparks of this divine fire in us; and Christ said, "Ye have it because it is the Divine nature." He that sits upon the circle of the heaven, and looks abroad upon all things, looks with compassion; and if he punishes, it is as a father. If he chastises, it is not for vengeance; it is not for violence: it is for recovery, for restoration, for re-harmonization.

Paul saw the willingness of God to suffer for righteousness in his creation, and he sought to make it known to men. The cross was his theme. The cross means Christ suffering for the world. The cross overthrew the throne. Jupiter sat upon sapphire, or radiant stone, on the summit of Olympus, receiving; but Christ represents God, by the symbol of ignominy, as sitting at the center of the universe, giving—giving himself; giving his thought; giving his administration; giving all the power and all the resources of the universe—for men. And see how this exactly couples itself with the prominent tendencies of modern thought; for, whatever may be the ultimate theories, however far they may reach in any direction, every one of us knows that, so far as the organized

nations of the world are concerned, they begin at the point of savagism and barbarism, and that the advance is from this low condition up.

Now, what power is there that can draw out all the finer elements of human nature? What that can draw out all the intelligence of men? What that can draw out the exquisite element of sacrifice and magnanimity? What that can draw out courage and undying fidelity? What that can draw out the ten thousand glancing colors of taste, fancy, imagination? What, but some power divine?

Go with all your fire engines, and syringes, and garden-spouts, and see if you can take from yonder morass all that dead and decaying water, cover the heavens with it, and purify it. But the sun stands, and looks, and says to every dismal swamp, to every reeking lagoon, to every miasmatic pool on the face of the earth, "Come up! Come up!" and straightway the water hears, and the particles dissolve, and unseen fly up into the air; and when the whole air is filled with vapor, and the vapor has reached the higher altitudes, coming into contact with the cold, it is condensed, it becomes clouds, and they fall back to the earth in the form of rain, and we catch it, and we give it to the sick person and to the child, a crystal draught. It went from the pool, impure and poisonous, it was aerated in the heavens, and it came back pure; but the sun was the only thing that could cause this transformation—the great central power that governs the world.

You can perceive that there might be little engineering which should lift single men up from their degraded condition to the plane of nascent virtues: but what has taken hold of generations; what has carried up races; what has gone round and round the globe, falling on low and passionate life, and lifted it up to a higher sphere; what has quickened dull natures, and strengthened weak ones; what has shot taste and refinement and gentleness all through the race, and given a new cast to modern thought and feeling, but that revelation of the love of God which measures itself by suffering for the poor and the needy, that it may exalt them and carry them up?



If the world were to-day what the world was, it would be the cruelest of things to preach God as stern; but the world being universally wicked and animal, the disclosure of the love of God in Jesus Christ fits the government above to the conditions below, and harmonizes a hundred of those mysterious questions which have been put away without an answer, or which have left the most honest thinkers perplexed. We have a God who spends his life in bringing up perfectness from imperfection. We have a school-master God who is bringing up little children through all the steps of education from ignorance and vagrancy to knowledge and virtue. We have a mother God that is patient and willing to wait for all the evil to run itself out, and for all the good to gather strength and come to perfection. We have in God the summer,—the source and the magnificent disclosure of all those qualities by which the household lives, and friendship survives, and the race is redeemed from animalism, and promises yet to have a second heaven here.

That is the idea of Christ Jesus which filled the mind of the apostle, and made him say, "I determined not to know anything among you, but Christ, and him crucified." It was the crucifixion; it was the suffering; it was the willingness to suffer; it was the everlasting vocation of suffering; it was the forbearance; it was the soul-care—it was this in the nature of Jesus Christ that filled the mind of the apostle; and where it has been preached in sincerity and in truth it has always had the same effect; and it will to the end. "Your mother weeps for you" has brought more boys home than "Your father is angry with you." When men have gone wrong, they do not go back to justice: they go back to pity and sorrow. A man who has gone wrong, and has nobody to pity him or to sorrow for him, is lost. A man that has gone wrong, and has those that are willing to bear all that is necessary to restore him, is saved.

Now, such a one is God—the best friend you have; the tenderest; the nearest; the most unforgetting; the most wonderful; the one by whom you have lived in all that is noble in you; the one by whom you are yet to thrive; the one who, when he shall break upon you in the fullness of his

glory, will be worshipped with no acclaim as an almighty potentate, but with clasping of hands and yearning of hearts; and the whole soul of love shall incite the song, and lead the chorus of the redeemed, when they stand in Zion and before God.



## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE know how imperfect, O Lord our God, are all our thoughts. We do not bring ourselves to thee as those that know the way, or understand God, or even know themselves, or present the best things. We come as little children. We have plucked flowers by the wayside, not knowing what they are—only knowing that they are the best that we can bring. And so we bring our weakness to thee, because we know not where else to go but to eternal strength; and we bring our ignorance to thee, even as the night brings its darkness to the morning; and we bring our sorrow to thee, because we have heard that the God of all the earth is pitiful and compassionate. We bring our sin, because thou art willing to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin. We bring our whole selves, because thou hast declared that thou art the Bread of Life, and that every hunger that feeds upon thee has nourishment for every part. As the bread that we eat changes itself to whatever the body needs, so we partake of thee, and know not how to discriminate; and yet we are strengthened in understanding, and in imagination, and in affection, and in patience, and in courage, and in hope, and in faith, and in love bright above them all.

We rejoice in thee, thou all-supplying God, who art not central selfishness, but art as the sun, giving forth out of thyself infinite light and warmth, and carrying life every whither. We rejoice in thy glory. We rejoice in the revelations, so far as thou hast disclosed them, of thyself. Thou art everywhere; and to those that are equipped with spiritual life thou needest no revelation, since they behold thee and know thee; but we have not yet broken through—we that are hedged in and hemmed by these mortal conditions—and we do not discern thee though thou art above us, nor do we feel thee though thou art around about us; and we have need that thou shouldst interpret thyself to us. Yet we see thee under all manifestations and intimations as through a glass, darkly, and know that thou art something better than the best that we think of, and greater than the greatest of our conceptions, and nobler than our utmost thought of magnanimity and of grandeur, surpassing our poor and fitful conception of thee as much as the orbs in the heavens surpass the thoughts of little children that look at them.

And now, O Lord our God, we pray that thou wilt quicken in us

all those springs by which we discern thee more perfectly; and yet grant unto us the consolation, day by day and continually increasing, that we shall ere long stand face to face, and see thee as thou art, and be satisfied. We rejoice that we are not now satisfied; that ignoble content does not hold us down; that the more generous inspirations of growth are continually pressing upon us. We desire still to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We desire humility. We desire meekness. We desire all those conditions out of which come true spiritual knowledge and true spiritual strength. And we pray that thou wilt minister to us, this day, by the Holy Ghost, all those influences by which the truth shall be made efficacious to us. Teach us as little children. Hand down thy mercies to us. Divide and parcel them as we severally need. Only God can suit all hearts in all states; but this thou canst do. Thou canst do exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think.

And so, O thou blessed God, we commend to thee this waiting congregation, praying that thou wilt manifest severally to each one of them all that which they need this day for health, for strength, for consolation, for inspiration, for joy unspeakable and full of glory; and if they come bearing a consciousness of their own deep personal and spiritual want, may they still find thee ready to supply, and to send them cheerful away. If they come conscious of burdens and of cares which they can neither shake off nor well endure, may they find stealing upon them the hidden strength of God, so that the lightness which strength gives to trouble shall seem to them to be the loss of trouble itself.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be near to those who are this day brought to a quick sense of their sorrows, of their bereavements, of their separations, of their distresses of any kind. Thou that hast fashioned men, and taught their hearts to twine about each other; thou that dost bring forth blossoms that fall and fall away fruitless so often; thou that knowest sorrow; thou that art the God who wert pierced by suffering in every way through Jesus Christ, look upon all the children of trouble and distress, and grant unto them such submission, yet more, such trust, yea more, such rejoicing in trouble, as that the peaceable fruits of righteousness shall come forth from their experience.

And we pray that thou wilt be near to all those who are conscious of barrenness; to all those who have wandered away from belief, or have never been anchored therein; to all those who have looked upon religion, and have not seen its comeliness nor known its power. O Lord, we pray that thou wilt grant unto them, this morning, such a message from thine own self, from the piercing of thine own Spirit, that they shall know and discern that the things of the senses are not enough, and that the great life is the life which lies beyond these. May they be hungry-hearted, and may their hunger bring them to thee, thou that art the Bread of Life!

And if there be those this morning who bethink them of earlier Sabbaths, and earlier worship in other places, and under other ministrations, when their parents took them by the hand, and led them



forth to the house of God from which they long ago departed; O Lord, if there be those that have backslidden from the instructions of their childhood, and from their earlier faiths, and gone into the world careless, embittered, or unbelieving, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bring them back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Oh, bring them back by their need or by their gratitude, by their joy or by their sorrow, by what they have gained or by what they have lost. Thou that knowest how to make summer even in winter, and by ten thousand genial influences to bring forth everything that grows, dost thou not know yet better how to deal with the human soul? We beseech thee to grant that those who are aliens far from the commonwealth of Israel may be ministered unto and brought nigh, so that, finally, they shall partake of the blood of the everlasting covenant.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to all those who are members of this church, and to all those who are laboring in word and doctrine in our midst. To all householders, to all parents, and to all those that are in the household, may there be the ministration of the Divine presence, and the fruit of Divine love. We beseech of thee that thou wilt teach those that are teaching. Breathe the spirit of Christ into those that make known the word of Christ. Clothe them with patience, and gentleness, and sympathy, and forbearance; and may they give, not expecting to receive again. May they sow, and be willing to wait until the harvest shall come. So may they be as the Master.

We pray that thou wilt bless those who are laboring in word and doctrine in all the churches that are round about us. We pray for thy ministering servants, that they may be purified; that they may be made more and more clear-minded by communion with God; that they may have more and more faith; that they may be more and more imbued with the power of God, and that thine indwelling may appear from the outcome of their ministrations. May thy people of every name break down hindrances, take away divisive influences, remove every root of dissension, and for Christ's sake come together, and walk in the way of usefulness.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all who are separated from us; upon all who have gone forth from our midst; upon all that are upon the sea; upon all that are in distant lands, or that are scattered wide abroad in our own land. They are not far from us—no farther than we can go in our thoughts are they distant; and we bring them near every day and every hour. Grant that providence which watches alike upon the sea and upon the land; and may it be over them for mercy and for goodness.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that thy servants who know not what a day will bring forth may hold themselves prepared for sickness; for the loss of children; for the overthrow of worldly ambitions; for any sorrow or trouble of whatsoever kind that may overtake them. May we not look on the outward visible life, but upon the life that is to come, knowing that the things which are seen, are temporal and changing, while the things that are unseen are eternal and immutable. We beseech of thee that thy people

beforehand may be armed and strengthened for every emergency of life by the presence of God. May they fear no evil, and may they be able continually to cast their care upon thee because thou carest for them, and to walk in such rejoicing, singing such triumphant songs, that men, for their very joy's sake, shall be tempted to follow them. May their sorrow become joy, and their weakness strength, because the things that are not in men's estimation are apparently mightier than the things that are. So may thy kingdom be established in the hearts of thy people.

And now, O Lord, we beseech thee to grant thy blessing to rest upon thy dear children that have been brought out this morning by loving parents, that they may be consecrated from the beginning of life to the service of goodness. May these children be reared in a true knowledge of piety, and in the hardihood of virtue. May they make good soldiers of the Cross, and go forth every whither to prove the word and doctrine of God. May the prayers of thy people go up for them. May those who love their own children remember the love that these parents have for theirs, and mingle their prayers for their own children with prayers for the children of others, so that we may all of us be knit together by common thought and common sympathy. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt teach these parents how to fulfill the vows which they have made; how to endue these children with all grace and truth. From their example and through their disposition, as well as by word of mouth, may they lead them in the right way.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt have compassion upon the poor children who have no parents, and upon the children that are worse off than if they had no parents—children whose entrance into life was through a dark door—through a stormy way. And raise up in a thousand hearts that compassion and those mercies which shall make up to these little ones in some measure that which they lack.

We pray that thou wilt bless all those who are ministering to the poor; to those who are in distress by reason of their own sin; to those who lie under the world's disgrace; to those who are helpless and needy. May those, thy saints, who are giving time and thought and heart for the poor and needy be remembered abundantly of thee. O thou God of mercy and of compassion, more and more open the secret fountains of sympathy and pity, that there may be those who shall preach Christ by their deeds as well as by their lips in every church and in every household, and that thy name may be made glorious in the fullness of its power.

We pray for our land. We pray for all nations. We pray for the day when they shall make war one upon another no more, envying or boasting or selfishly grasping. May the day of peace come—not supine and languid peace, but peace based upon justice, upon liberty, upon knowledge, and upon truth; and grant that everywhere, through all the world, the glory of the Lord—the latter day glory—may come, and the new heavens and the new earth appear in which dwelleth righteousness.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit.  
*Amen.*

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